**Taliban Claim Responsibility for Kabul Guest House Attack**

**Kabul:** The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the seven-hour overnight siege on a Kabul guest house on Wednesday in which 14 people, including four Indians and an American, were killed.  
  
"The attack was planned carefully to target the party in which important people and Americans were attending," the militants said in a statement.  
  
The gunmen attacked the Park Palace guest house in Kabul's Kolola Pushta area at around 8:30 pm local time on Wednesday. Six Indians were in the building at the time.  
  
Explosions and bursts of gunfire were heard as the gunmen reportedly went from room to room searching for people; witnesses told NDTV that bullets whizzed past them as they hid in their rooms.  
  
Sources have told NDTV that India's envoy could have been the intended target as the Indian embassy is in the same area.  
  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is in China on a three-day visit, spoke to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani and offered condolences on loss of lives due to the Kabul attack. Mr Modi had tweeted late last night: "In the aircraft I got news about the attack in Kabul. Am concerned about the situation & I pray for everyone's safety (sic)."  
  
Kabul Police Chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi told reporters that at least 54 guests - some had come for a music concert - were rescued by the police and special forces.  
  
A concert by well-known Afghan classical singer Altaf Hussain was about to begin at the guest house when the gunfire started.  
  
Kolola Pushta is home to several international guest houses and hotels and is near the Afghan interior ministry.  
  
The attack came a day after a visit to Kabul by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who pledged to support Afghanistan in its battle against the Taliban, saying "the enemies of Afghanistan cannot be the friends of Pakistan."  
  
Wednesday's assault was reminiscent of two attacks last year on a hotel and a restaurant in which 30 were killed.  
  
Earlier on Wednesday, gunmen opened fire at a meeting of Muslim clerics in Helmand, killing at least seven people. The Taliban, ousted from power in 2001, have stepped up attacks since they announced their "spring offensive" last month, after most foreign forces pulled out at the end of last year.

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